

THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION



Richard Land, D.Phil. (*Oxon.*), President

July 27, 2010

The Honorable Spencer Bachus
Ranking Member, House Financial Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
2246 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Bachus:

We write to reaffirm our strong opposition to any effort within the House Financial Services Committee to move forward with the Internet Gambling Regulation, Consumer Protection, and Enforcement Act (H.R. 2267). The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission opposes this bill as it would overturn many U.S. gambling laws and could significantly harm America's youth, families, and communities. We strongly urge that the current Internet gambling laws not be weakened by adopting this bill.

We are especially troubled by several provisions in H.R. 2267. The bill's "safe harbor" provision exempts licensees from state and federal regulations by providing "complete defense against any prosecution." This provision would eliminate enforcement of many consumer protection and regulatory laws. In addition, as the National Association of Attorneys General warns, H.R. 2267 strips individual states of their traditional authority to regulate gambling by giving this power to the Treasury Department. It also takes away the power to criminalize Internet gambling from the individual state citizens and gives it to governors, as they can effectively repeal state gambling laws by choosing not to opt out of legalized Internet gambling with the Treasury Department. In addition to these provisions, this bill would serve the financial interest of overseas gambling firms and complicate U.S. trade commitments.

Furthermore, we are opposed to an amendment by Congressman Campbell that would supposedly allay concerns on H.R. 2267. This so-called fix is woefully inadequate. The Campbell Amendment still allows for the legalization of gambling over the Internet. It does nothing to resolve this problem, and is therefore unworthy of support. We oppose the Campbell Amendment for the same reason we oppose H.R. 2267.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 2267, as well as the Campbell Amendment and any other efforts to legalize or weaken our current laws regulating Internet gambling in the United States. This is a critical issue for the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists, as the erosion of Internet gambling laws threatens many American communities, families, and young adults with financial and social unrest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard D. Land'.

Richard D. Land